

## CHAPTER XIV.

Elections of 1780.—Burke rejected for Bristol.—War with Holland.—French attack upon Jersey.—Capture of St. Eustatius by Rodney.—Privateering.—Action off the Dogger Bank.—Difficulties of Washington's army.—Mutinies.—Cornwallis in the Carolinas.—He is defeated at Cowpens.—His victory at Guilford.—Cornwallis marches into Virginia.—Fleet of De Grasse arrives in the Chesapeake.—Washington's march to Virginia.—Cornwallis fortifies York Town.—He is besieged, and his supplies cut off.—He capitulates.—Surrender of the British army.—The disastrous news received in London.

THE new Parliament assembled on the 1st of November, 1780. The elections had, in some degree, furnished a test of the popular feeling, in the choice of their members by large communities. They had certainly not manifested that the opinion of commercial cities, represented by that very ill-compounded body of voters called freemen, was favourable to the growth of a just and liberal policy. Edmund Burke was rejected by Bristol, after having served that flourishing emporium of trade for six years. The sentiment against him was so decided that he could not even venture to go to the poll. What were the public crimes imputed to him? First, that he had voted for Bills which removed some of the barbarous restrictions upon the trade of Ireland. It was in vain that he had told his constituents, whilst this measure of relief was depending in 1778, that "trade is not a limited thing; as if the objects of mutual demand and consumption could not stretch beyond the bounds of our jealousies;"\* that England and Ireland might flourish together; that everything that is got by another is not taken from ourselves. Secondly, it was charged against the member for Bristol, that he had supported a Bill for reforming the law process concerning imprisonment for debt; and thus had endeavoured to mitigate some of the frightful evils of a system under which a debtor might be imprisoned for life at the bidding of an inexorable creditor, unless relieved by those occasional acts of grace "which turned loose upon the public three or four thousand naked wretches, corrupted by the habits, debased by the ignominy, of a prison."† It was in his speech to the electors, in defending his maintenance of the principle that "the counting-house has no alliance with the gaol," that Burke pronounced his splendid eulogy on Howard;

\* "Two Letters to Gentlemen in Bristol."

† "Speech at Bristol."

"He has visited all Europe,—not to survey the sumptuousness of palaces, or the stateliness of temples; not to make accurate measurements of the remains of ancient grandeur, nor to form a scale of the curiosity of modern art; not to collect medals, or to collate manuscripts;—but to dive into the depths of dungeons; to plunge into the infection of hospitals; to survey the mansions of sorrow and pain; to take the gauge and dimensions of misery, depression, and contempt; to remember the forgotten, to attend to the neglected, to visit the forsaken, and to compare and collate the distresses of all men in all countries." The third charge of the citizens of Bristol against their representative was his support of sir George Savile's Bill for the relief of the Roman Catholics from the penal laws—that wise and politic measure which produced the riots of 1780. Burke's manly exposure of the cowardice which argued that the Act of Relief ought not to have been passed, in deference to Protestant prejudices, is an example of the mode in which honest statesmen ought to encounter popular delusions. The spirit which dictated the peroration of his speech to the electors is worthy of the imitation of the highest and the humblest in rank or talent who aspire to be legislators: "I do not here stand before you accused of venality, or of neglect of duty. It is not said that, in the long period of my service, I have, in a single instance, sacrificed the slightest of your interests to my ambition, or to my fortune. It is not alleged that, to gratify any anger, revenge of my own or of my party, I have had a share in wronging or oppressing any description of men, or any one man in any description. No! The charges against me are all of one kind, that I have pushed the principles of general justice and benevolence too far; further than a cautious policy would warrant; and further than the opinions of many would go along with me. In every accident which may happen through life,—in pain, in sorrow, in depression and distress—I will call to mind this accusation, and be comforted."

The elections were generally favourable to the Court. The riots of London had spread terror through the country. Opposition to the measures of government, conducted legally and peacefully, was regarded by many of the rich and most of the timid as encouragement to the outrages of ignorant multitudes. Although a hundred and thirteen new members were returned to this Parliament, there were few expensive contests, especially for counties. Of the new members, there were several young men whose names afterwards became famous. Wilberforce was returned for Hull, by a corrupt expenditure of eight or nine thousand pounds.\* Pitt

\* "Life of Wilberforce," by his sons, vol. i. p. 15.

sat for the close borough of Appleby, having unsuccessfully contested the University of Cambridge. Sheridan was elected for Stafford.

The ministry, as might be expected from the result of the elections, had acquired a firmer position. On the 25th of January a royal message announced a rupture with Holland, the reasons of which were set forth in a manifesto. An amendment to the Address in support of the war was rejected by large majorities in both houses. Burke, having been returned for the borough of Malton, brought forward his motion for the regulation of the Civil List, which had been rejected in the previous Session. It again met with the same fate. Pitt made his first speech on this occasion, in support of the Bill. Two more efforts put the young orator upon a level with the most influential members of the party that advocated retrenchment and reform, and were opposed to the American war—a war described by the son of Chatham as “a most accursed, wicked, barbarous, cruel, unnatural, unjust, and diabolical war!” Of these displays of his friend, Wilberforce thus prophesied: “He comes out as his father did, a ready-made orator; and I doubt not but that I shall one day or other see him the first man in the country.”\*

At the beginning of 1781, the French made a desperate effort to secure the most important of the Channel Islands—the last possession of the duchy of Normandy which remained to the English crown. During the American war two previous attacks had been made upon Jersey, without success. The baron de Rullecourt had sailed from Granville, in Normandy, in a season of tempest, with a fleet of small vessels carrying two thousand troops. About half his force was driven back to the coast of France. But on the night of the 5th of January he landed eight hundred men at the Violet Bank, about three miles from St. Helier; and before daybreak was in possession of that town. The lieutenant-governor and the magistrates being seized, Rullecourt terrified them into signing a capitulation. The officers in Elizabeth Castle declared that they were not bound by such an act, and refused to surrender the fortress. Meanwhile a spirited young officer, major Pierson, of the 97th regiment, had collected the militia of the island, with some other troops; and, in answer to a demand from Rullecourt to capitulate, replied that if the French commander did not himself surrender in twenty minutes he should be attacked. Pierson led his columns into the town; drove the enemy from street to street; and finally compelled the whole body to surrender in

\* “Life of Wilberforce,” by his sons, vol. i. p. 22.

the market-place. The gallant Englishman was shot through the heart at the moment of his triumph; and the French invader was mortally wounded.

Great Britain had now to encounter the hazards of a maritime war with France, Spain, and Holland. For two years this somewhat unequal battle was most vigorously fought, wherever there was a hostile flag to be encountered. The ancient supremacy of the seas was again maintained, single-handed, against four allied powers. Whatever were the misfortunes of the British army that terminated the conflict in America, the close of the war was marked by maritime successes, which had an important influence upon the conclusion of a peace; and whose example stimulated that heroic spirit in our naval commanders which was the chief safety of our country in another war of even greater peril.

The first signal event of the war with Holland was the capture of St. Eustatius, one of the Leeward Islands. This small possession, which had been colonized by the Dutch for a hundred and eighty years, was especially valuable to them as the seat of a great commerce—as the grand free port of the West Indies and America, and as a general market, and magazine, to all nations.\* This rock was in itself a natural fortification. Its one landing-place is now so fortified as to be considered impregnable. On the 3rd of February, 1781, when admiral Rodney, having been apprised of the declaration of war, appeared before St. Eustatius with a large fleet, and demanded an immediate surrender, the governor deemed all resistance unavailing. The riches in merchandise obtained by this success were beyond all previous conception. The whole island was one vast emporium of sugar and tobacco, and all the richer products of the West Indies. In the bay two hundred and fifty trading vessels were captured. All the valuable property belonging, not only to the Dutch West India Company and the traders of Amsterdam, but to the merchants of Great Britain and the residents of our West Indian Islands, was indiscriminately seized. Rodney, who had the command of the West India station, was beset with remonstrances and applications for redress. The merchants of St. Christopher's had been great sufferers, and the legislature of that island supported their claims to compensation, on the ground that they had lodged their property at St. Eustatius under the guarantee of several Acts of Parliament. They were told that the island was Dutch, everything in it was Dutch, was under the protection of the Dutch flag, and as Dutch it should be treated. Jews, Americans, French, and native Dutch, were suc-

\* “Annual Register,” 1781, p. 101.

cessively transported from the island. Their property was sold by public auction; and merchandise, to the amount of three millions, was disposed of at a terrible depreciation, and found its way chiefly to the French and Danish islands. May we not hope that such a barbarous mode of conducting warfare has passed away; and that, although merchants cannot expect to be wholly exempted from loss and suffering, it will cease to be an object with a great naval power such as Britain, so to time its declaration of hostilities, as to rush upon unprepared and unsuspecting commercial communities "like thieves who break through and steal." Rodney, in his official despatch, disclaimed any hope of private advantage. Lord North, in a debate in the House of Commons upon the question of the confiscation of the property at St. Eustatius, stated that he had received a letter from the admiral in which he had said he did not consider the property as belonging to himself but to the Crown; and Rodney, in his place as a member, declared he had no other idea at the time when he seized all the property in the island than that it belonged of right to his country. "He had not received intelligence, till long after the confiscation, of his majesty's gracious intentions of relinquishing his rights in favour of the fleet and army to whom the island was surrendered." Litigation in the courts of law left little to the captors of what had been saved from recapture by the French in its conveyance home. The nation had to endure a great amount of opprobrium in Europe; and the English flag came to be regarded in the West Indies as an ensign almost as much to be dreaded as the black flag of the pirate. The piratical flag was really raised by a squadron of privateers from Bristol, who set sail upon hearing of the rupture with Holland, without waiting for those letters of marque and reprisal under which their acts would have been legalised. The Dutch settlements in Guiana offered tempting prizes to these adventurers. To plunder the rich Hollanders appeared to be an object worthy of British enterprize, whether lawful or unlawful. The present age has grown ashamed of the system of privateering, however regularly conducted under the recognized forms. Enlightened men were always averse to this mode of private plunder under the pretence of national advantage. Franklin, in the negotiations for the peace of 1783, proposed that Great Britain and America, as well as the other belligerent powers, should agree not to grant any commissions to private armed vessels, empowering them to take or destroy trading ships. In 1856, after the close of the war with Russia, the Conference at Paris recommended the entire abolition of the system of privateering, and the acknowledgment of the

rights of neutrals, as desirable and necessary changes for bringing the system of war into harmony with the ideas and principles of modern civilization. There was one dissentient power whose ministers thought it politic to forget the recommendation of their illustrious countryman.

It was made a charge against sir George Rodney that he lingered at St. Eustatius from February to May, for the purpose of looking after his own interests, when he might during that time have carried on offensive operations at Martinique, where the French had an inferior force to oppose him. He was busy, it was said, about the captured merchandise, while the French fleet was reinforced, and Tobago was taken. Rodney defended himself by alleging that he had sent sir Samuel Hood, as he believed with an adequate force, to oppose the armament under De Grasse that had sailed from France. The force was not adequate; for five ships came out of Port Royal harbour to join the French admiral; and although there was a partial action, the English operations were wholly inefficient. The next year Rodney nobly vindicated himself from any imputation of want of zeal and daring. It was, indeed, then time that some great effort should be made to assert the maritime eminence of England; for lord Mulgrave, according to a report of his speech in November, 1781, maintained an opinion very strangely opposed to the prevailing belief: "We are not, nor ever were, equal to France in a naval contest, where France applied all her resources and strength to the raising of a navy."\* An engagement off the Dogger Bank between a squadron under admiral Hyde Parker and a Dutch squadron, recalled the memory of "those dreadful sea-fights between England and Holland which the last century witnessed."† Like many of those sea-fights, there was no result but mutual destruction and prolonged animosity. The bravery and endurance of a British garrison were never more signally displayed than in the defence of Gibraltar during this year. Of that memorable siege we shall have to relate the continuous story in a subsequent chapter.

At no period of the contest between Great Britain and the United States were the two principals in the war in a condition in which peace was more necessary to each than at the beginning of the year 1781. Washington, looking at the extensive confederacy against England, thought, towards the end of the campaign of 1780, that it would not be in her power to continue the contest. But he was soon convinced that, however menaced on every side, England was entering upon another campaign without manifesting any sign

\* "Parliamentary History," vol. 22, col. 711. † "Annual Register," 1782, p. 120.

of exhaustion. The American commander looked at his own resources, and saw little to inspire him with the hope of any decisive success. At this period he writes, "I see nothing before us but accumulating distress. We have been half our time without provisions, and are likely to continue so. We have no magazines, nor money to form them. We have lived upon expedients until we can live no longer."\* The Congress, at the end of 1783, transmitted a letter to Franklin, addressed to the king of France, urgently requesting arms, ammunition, clothing, and a loan of money. Franklin writes to the French minister of foreign affairs, to express his opinion "that the present conjuncture is critical; that there is some danger lest the Congress should lose its influence over the people, if it is found unable to procure the aids that are wanted; and that the whole system of the new government in America may therefore be shaken."† Franklin at this crisis, when the immediate prospect was so obscure, predicted of a more remote future, if America should fail in asserting its independence, and "if the English were suffered once to recover that country." He prophesied "that the possession of those fertile and extensive regions, and that vast sea-coast, will afford them so broad a basis for future greatness, by the rapid growth of their commerce and breed of seamen and soldiers, as will enable them to become the terror of Europe, and to exercise with impunity that insolence which is so natural to their nation."‡ Franklin, amidst the blandishments of Paris, had become half a Frenchman. John Adams, who at this period was the American envoy at Amsterdam, reports how some of the Dutch prophesied after another fashion—"that America has the interest of all Europe against her; that she will become the greatest manufacturing country, and thus ruin Europe; that she will become a great and ambitious military and naval power, and consequently terrible to Europe."§ Without regarding the possible effect of the establishment of American independence upon the future stability of the monarchy of France, the government of Louis XVI. resolved to make one more effort in this strange alliance between liberty and despotism. Six millions of livres were granted to America as a free gift. The king of France wanted to borrow money himself to support the war, and could not injure his own credit by being associated with an American loan, for the depreciation of the paper of Congress had closed the pockets of European capitalists.¶ To add to the gloom of the Republican leaders, on new year's day thirteen hundred of the troops raised by Penn-

\* Ramsay. "Life of Washington," p. 162. † "Works," vol. viii. p. 534.

‡ *Ibid.* § *Ibid.*, p. 494, Letter to Franklin, August, 1780. ¶ *Ibid.*, vol. ix. p. 2.

sylvania mutinied for redress of grievances to which Congress had given no heed. They would serve no longer without pay, without food, without clothing. They marched away from their encampment at Morristown, and were reduced to obedience with great difficulty, but without severities. A similar mutiny in the brigade of New Jersey was quelled by a superior force, and by military executions.

The capture of Charlestown in May, 1780, and the victory of Camden in the following August, had led the English government to believe that another campaign would produce a favourable termination of the war. Lord George Germaine, in a letter to Lord Cornwallis, takes the same high tone about the restoration of the constitution, and the punishment of rebels, as in the early stages of the conflict. He approves of the severities of Cornwallis towards traitors: "The most disaffected will now be convinced that we are not afraid to punish, and will no longer venture to repeat their crimes in the hope of impunity should they be detected; and those who are more moderate will be led to withdraw from a cause which is evidently declining, before it becomes desperate, and they expose themselves to the consequences they may reasonably apprehend will fall upon such as persist in rebellion to the last."\* With such an adviser, we can well understand how the king could have no other notion of three or four millions of Americans in revolt, than that they were mere traitors to be conquered, and then to be wholly dependent upon his royal mercy. The people of England were now, to a certain extent, in unison with the government as to the necessity of continuing the war. Mr. Hartley writes to Franklin, "I verily believe so great is the jealousy between England and France, that this country would fight for a straw to the last man, and the last shilling, rather than be dictated to by France."† The unfortunate union of common cause between America and France had turned aside the wish of the people of England for peace. This opinion of Mr. Hartley is confirmed—as far as a general sentiment can receive confirmation from the expression of opinion in particular localities—by the tone of public meetings and the words of addresses to the crown.

Lord Cornwallis, in his camp at Wynnesborough, amidst the flooded rivers and creeks of South Carolina, was not so sanguine as the secretary at Whitehall. The whole country, he writes to sir Henry Clinton at the beginning of January, is kept in continual alarm by perpetual risings in different parts of the province, and

\* "Cornwallis Correspondence," vol. i. p. 81.

† "Franklin's Works," vol. ix. p. 119.

the invariable success of these parties against the royalist militia.\* On the 7th of January, Cornwallis began his march for North Carolina. He sent forward lieut. colonel Tarleton, with seven hundred infantry and three hundred and fifty cavalry, "to endeavour to strike a blow at general Morgan." Heavy rains swelled the water-courses, and impeded the progress of the army. On the 17th Tarleton came up with Morgan; and the battle of Cowpens resulted in the total defeat of the British. The American line had given way, and the British were in disorderly pursuit, when Morgan's corps faced about and poured in a heavy fire upon the pursuers. A general panic ensued, in spite of the exertions, entreaties, and example of colonel Tarleton. More than one-half of the royalist forces were killed, wounded, or taken prisoners, by an enemy not superior in numbers. This defeat is described as "the most serious calamity which had occurred since Saratoga — and crippled lord Cornwallis for the remainder of the war." †

Morgan, after his victory at the Cowpens, was enabled, though closely pursued by Cornwallis, to unite his forces with those of Nathaniel Green, a meritorious officer, who was appointed to succeed Gates as commander of the American army in North and South Carolina. By the judicious arrangements of general Greene he was enabled to avoid a battle with the superior force of Cornwallis, and entered Virginia. Jefferson was the governor of that State. At the beginning of January, Arnold, who was now in full activity in the British service, landed about nine hundred men at James Town. They burnt all the public property at Richmond and other places, and having marched more than thirty miles into the interior, regained their vessels. This incursion occupied only forty-eight hours. Virginia had at that time a population of more than half-a-million, and there were fifty thousand enrolled militia. But these were scattered over the country; and Richmond, the capital, was a town, or rather village, of only eighteen hundred inhabitants. The militia was a force upon paper, with few men called into the field; and without money or arms it would have been useless to collect and embody them. This was the defence made by Jefferson, when his enemies accused him of neglect, and threatened impeachment. ‡ Arnold made a second irruption in April, and again destroyed much property. General Greene had been reinforced with all the available militia from Virginia at the beginning of March; and on the 15th he was approaching Guilford, in North Carolina, with an army of seven thousand men. On that

\* "Cornwallis Correspondence," vol. i. p. 81.

† *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 84.

‡ Tucker's "Life of Jefferson," vol. i. p. 150.

day lord Cornwallis attacked him, and after an action of an hour and a-half routed the American army, and took their cannon. The British sustained a heavy loss. "The great fatigue of the troops," writes Cornwallis to Rawdon, "the number of wounded, and the want of provisions, prevented our pursuing the enemy."\* Greene who had fled twenty miles from Guilford, soon became the pursuer. By his incessant activity he cut off supplies from the British army, which was compelled to fall back to Wilmington, on the Cape Fear River. He arrived there on the 7th of April. On the 10th he wrote to major-general Phillips, "I have had a most difficult and dangerous campaign, and was obliged to fight a battle, two hundred miles from any communication, with an enemy seven times my number. The fate of it was long doubtful. We had not a regiment or corps that did not at some time give way." He adds, "I am quite tired of marching about the country in quest of adventures. If we mean an offensive war in America we must abandon New York, and bring our whole force into Virginia; we then have a stake to fight for, and a successful battle may give us America." † Cornwallis wrote home to lord George Germaine to recommend "a serious attempt upon Virginia." On the 23rd, without waiting for instructions from the ministry, or receiving orders from sir Henry Clinton, his superior officer, he resolved, upon his own responsibility, as he expressed in another letter to the Secretary of State, "to take advantage of general Greene's having left the back of Virginia open, and march immediately into that province, to attempt a junction with general Phillips." He apologizes to Clinton for deciding upon measures so important, without his direction or approbation; alleging "the delay and difficulty of conveying letters, and the impossibility of waiting for answers." ‡ The opinions of Clinton and Cornwallis upon the conduct of the war were not in accord. Clinton thought the main object was to defend New York, and merely maintain the posts held in the Southern provinces. Cornwallis held that if a defensive war was the plan to be adopted, mixed with desultory expeditions, it would be best to abandon the Carolinas, which could not be held defensively whilst Virginia could be so easily armed. "Let us quit the Carolinas, and stick to our salt-pork at New York, sending now and then a detachment to steal tobacco." Whilst Cornwallis was setting forth on an undertaking which, he says, "sits heavy on my mind," Rawdon, on the 25th of April, won a battle near Camden. He sallied from that post to attack general Greene, whose force doubled his own. The Amer-

\* "Cornwallis Correspondence," vol. i. p. 86.

† *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 88.

‡ "Cornwallis Correspondence," vol. i. p. 94, 95.

icans quitted the field; but the victory had no eventual benefit for the British cause.

Lord Cornwallis crossed James River, into Virginia, on the 26th of May. General Phillips had died whilst his friend was on his march to join him. Cornwallis was, however, now strengthened by reinforcements, and proposed to dislodge La Fayette from Richmond. But La Fayette moved to the upper country, and though the English general wrote "the boy cannot escape me," the boy was too alert to be captured. The legislature of Virginia was sitting at Charlottesville, and colonel Tarleton was very near surprising the whole body. Jefferson himself had a narrow escape, having only quitted his own house at Monticello ten minutes before the British entered it. "His property, books, and papers, were all respected; with the exception of the waste which was committed in his cellars by a few of the men, without the knowledge of their commanding officer."\* The Virginians bitterly complained of the mischief committed upon their plantations by the invading army,—crops of corn and tobacco destroyed, barns burnt, horses carried off. The damage of six months was estimated at three millions sterling.†

On the 2nd of August Cornwallis was in possession of York Town, on the peninsula between the river York and the river James. "The position," he writes to his friend, brigadier O'Hara, "is bad, and of course we want more troops, and you know that every senior general takes without remorse from a junior, and tells him he has nothing to fear."‡ Clinton was urging him to send men to New York. During the month of August, Cornwallis was busily employed in fortifying York Town, and also Gloucester on the opposite side of the York River. On the 29th of August, the French West India fleet, under De Grasse, entered the Chesapeake, and landed a large force at James Town. Cornwallis wrote to Clinton, to apprise him of this event, and to announce that Washington "is said to be shortly expected." Clinton replied that he had no doubt that Washington was "moving with six thousand French and rebel troops" against Cornwallis; and that all the force that could be spared from New York should be sent to him.

At the beginning of August, Washington, encamped in the neighbourhood of New York, was anxiously expecting the arrival of the fleet under De Grasse. He had conceived hopes, more than usually sanguine, that a combined attack upon New York by land and sea might have given a decisive turn to the war. The des-

\* Tucker, "Life of Jefferson," vol. i. p. 160.

† *Ibid.*

‡ "Cornwallis Correspondence," vol. i. p. 112.

patches of Clinton to Cornwallis show how anxiously the British general looked to the defence of this important place, which had so long been the scene of hostilities. On the 14th of August Washington received intelligence that De Grasse had sailed to the Chesapeake. He instantly determined to abandon all idea of attacking New York, and to march for Virginia. On the 21st of August, the troops destined for the South were in motion, no attempt having been made by Clinton to interrupt their march.

Those qualities of a commander which are, at the least, as important, if not so dazzling, as his ability to "set a squadron in the field," have been rarely displayed more signally than in the provident care of Washington that no disorder should ensue from the sudden change in his whole plan of operations. He had to provide against the chance of attack on his march from New York to Trenton, and he adroitly managed to lead Clinton to believe that the march was a feint, and that he would return to his encampment. From Trenton his army had to be transported to Christiana, and from the Head of Elk down the Chesapeake. He had to make arrangements that, upon the instant of his arrival, all the craft fit for the navigation of the Delaware should be ready to embark his troops. He had to ensure a supply of salt provisions, flour, and rum, at the Head of Elk, to satisfy weary and grumbling men during their long river passage. They were grumblers because for some time they had received no pay. He arranged for "a douceur of a little hard money to put them in proper temper." He regarded the object of his movement as one of the greatest importance; and urged upon the authorities of the various States to provide the means for prosecuting a siege with rapidity. On the 6th of September, Washington was at the Head of Elk, and had put himself into communication with De Grasse. On the 10th he was for a few hours in his own home at Mount Vernon,—"a modest habitation, quite in keeping with the idea that we have of Cincinnatus, and of those of the other great commanders of the Roman republic."\* The troops had been embarked at the Head of Elk, but their general suddenly commanded them to stop. He had heard that De Grasse had gone to sea on the 5th, and he doubted whether the navigation of the bay would have been secure. De Grasse had set sail to encounter the West India fleet of sir Samuel Hood, which had effected a junction with six ships under admiral Graves, who, as senior officer, took the command. On the 5th a general engagement ensued, in which both fleets were damaged, but no vessels on either side were taken or destroyed. The French

\* Steuben, p. 346.

being reinforced by the squadron from Rhode Island, Graves returned to New York, and De Grasse remained master of the Chesapeake.

On the 17th of September, Cornwallis wrote somewhat despairingly to Clinton: "I am just informed that since the Rhode Island squadron has joined, they have thirty-six sail of the line. This place is in no state of defence. If you cannot relieve me very soon you must be prepared to hear the worst."\* He was promised relief, and the co-operation of a force of five thousand men, which was to be conveyed by the whole fleet on the 5th of October. On the 8th of September, Cornwallis had provisions for six weeks. The French fleet in the Chesapeake entirely cut off any chance of further supplies. On the 14th of October, then, according to this calculation, the British army would be in peril of starvation. But, according to one account, Cornwallis subsequently thought that he might hold out to the middle of November.†

On the 19th of September, Steuben, who had been appointed to a regular command in the siege of York Town, writes, "Cornwallis is fortifying himself like a brave general who must fall; but I think he will fall with honour."‡ Steuben was the only American officer who had ever taken part in a regular siege, and his assistance in the siege of York Town appears to have been especially valuable. On the 30th of September the besieging army broke ground, and constructed redoubts about eleven hundred yards from the British works. On the evening of the 9th they opened their batteries, and, writes Cornwallis on the 11th, "have since continued firing without intermission with about forty pieces of cannon, mostly heavy, and sixteen mortars." On the 12th their second parallel was opened. Cornwallis now began to lose hope: "Nothing," he says, "but a direct move to York River, which includes a successful naval action, can save me." On the 15th he apprised Clinton that his two advanced redoubts had been carried by storm; that his situation was very critical; that his first earthen works could not resist powerful artillery; and, his numbers being weakened, he concludes by saying, "the safety of the place is therefore so precarious, that I cannot recommend that the fleet and army should run great risk in endeavouring to save us." The catastrophe was close at hand. On the 20th of October, Cornwallis wrote to inform Clinton that, on the previous day, he had been forced to give up the posts of York and Gloucester, and to surren-

\* "Cornwallis Correspondence," vol. i. p. 120.

† *Ibid.*, p. 123—Letter of Brodrick to Townshend.

‡ "Life," p. 466.

der the troops under his command, by capitulation, as prisoners of war to the combined forces of America and France. In this letter he describes the difficulties he had encountered since he withdrew within the works in expectation of the promised relief. He dwells on the diminution of his numbers by the fire of the enemy and by sickness; on the exhaustion of the strength and spirits of those that remained. "Under all these circumstances I thought it would have been wanton and inhuman to the last degree to sacrifice the lives of this small body of gallant soldiers, who had ever behaved with so much fidelity and courage, by exposing them to an assault which, from the numbers and precautions of the enemy, could not fail to succeed."\* The garrison, at the time of the surrender, consisted of 363 officers, of whom some were sick; of 4541 non-commissioned officers and rank and file fit for duty; and of 2089 sick and wounded.

The Articles of Capitulation did not involve any degrading conditions. The garrisons of York and Gloucester were to march out to an appointed place, with shouldered arms, colours cased, and drums beating a British or German march; then to ground their arms, and return to the place of their encampment. The imagination might fill up a picture from this indistinct outline. But a very graphic representation of an extraordinary scene exists in the diary of an Anspach serjeant, who served in the British army.† We necessarily take only the prominent points of a lengthened detail. On the afternoon of the 19th of October, all the troops marched on the road to Williamsburg, in platoons, through the whole American and French army, who were drawn up in regiments. In front of each regiment were their generals and staff-officers. The French generals were attended by richly dressed servants in liveries. Count de Rochambeau, marquis de Lafayette, count de Deuxponts, and prince de Lucerne were there, wearing glittering stars and badges. The French formed the right wing. The left wing of the line was formed of the Americans. In front were their generals, Washington, Gates, Steuben, and Wayne. They were paraded in three lines. The regulars, in front, looked passable; but the militia, from Virginia and Maryland, were ragged and ill-looking. The prisoners were quite astonished at the immense number of their besiegers, whose lines, three ranks deep, extended nearly two miles. They passed through this formidable army to a large plain,

\* "Cornwallis Correspondence," vol. i. p. 120.

† First published in the "Life of Steuben," from the manuscript of John Conrad Doehla, in the possession of Friedrich Kaap, the author of that life, p. 459.

where a squadron of French hussars had formed a circle. One regiment after another had to pass into this circle, to lay down their muskets and other arms. The honest narrator says, "When our colonel, baron Seybothen, had marched his men into the circle, he had us drawn up in a line, stepped in front of it, and commanded first, 'Present arms,' and then, 'Lay down arms' put off swords and cartridge-boxes," while tears ran down his cheeks. Most of us were weeping like him." All the officers, English and German, were allowed to keep their swords. All marched back in utter silence to the camp. Their courage and their spirit were gone; "the more so," says the serjeant, "as in this our return march the American part of our conquerors jeered at us very insultingly." Upon their return to their lines and tents, they enjoyed full liberty. The French are described as behaving very well towards the conquered—altogether kind and obliging. Cornwallis, in his dispatch, makes no complaint of the Americans, but he clearly draws a distinction that seems expressive of no very cordial feeling towards those of the same race with himself: "The treatment, in general, that we have received from the enemy since our surrender has been perfectly good and proper; but the kindness and attention that has been shown to us by the French officers in particular—their delicate sensibility of our situation, their generous and pressing offer of money, both public and private, to any amount—has really gone beyond what I can possibly describe, and will, I hope, make an impression on the breast of every British officer whenever the fortune of war should put any of them into our power."\* The abbé Robin noticed that there was a much deeper feeling of animosity between the English and Americans, than between the English and French. As the English officers passed through the lines they saluted every French officer, but they showed no such courtesy to the American officers.† There was no wisdom or equity in this unmerited contempt of men who were fighting for a far higher cause than their French allies. There was only a paltry display of military pride against irregulars, and a servile imitation of the temper of the English Court towards "rebels." An article of capitulation proposed by Cornwallis was rejected by Washington;—"Natives or inhabitants of different parts of this country at present in York or Gloucester are not to be punished on account of having joined the British army." It was rejected upon this principle:—"The article cannot be assented

\* "Cornwallis Correspondence," vol. i. p. 130.

† Quoted by Lord Mahon, vol. vii. p. 181.

to, being altogether of civil resort. But Washington did not refuse his consent through any vindictive feeling. He allowed an article to stand, by which the Bonetta sloop of war should be left entirely at the disposal of lord Cornwallis, and be permitted to sail to New York without examination. The Anspach serjeant records that Tories of the country who were in the British army, and the French and American deserters who had joined during the siege, thus passed unmolested. This fact was probably unknown in England when Cornwallis was bitterly blamed for consenting to the refusal of the tenth article. "He ought," says Walpole, "to have declared he would die rather than sacrifice the poor Americans who had followed him from loyalty against their countrymen."\*

On the day that Cornwallis signed the capitulation, Clinton despatched the auxiliary force for his relief. When Cornwallis and his superior officer met at New York, their differences of opinion became a matter of serious controversy, which was subsequently taken up in parliamentary debates, and in pamphlets not devoid of personal acrimony. These charges and recriminations were soon forgotten in the more important political events that were a certain consequence of a calamity through which the war would very soon come to an end. There can be no doubt that the government felt the capitulation as an irremediable disaster. Wraxall, in his "Memoirs of his Own Time," has related a conversation which he had with lord George Germaine, as to the mode in which lord North received the intelligence. Wraxall, a very slovenly and inaccurate writer, has confounded the official account of the surrender with a French Gazette that reached London on Sunday, the 25th of November. Clinton's despatch did not reach lord George Germaine till midnight of the 25th, as is shown by a minute on the back of the letter; and therefore Wraxall's statement that lord George read the despatch to him and others at dinner, between five and six o'clock, is certainly incorrect.† But nevertheless we cannot, in common fairness, accuse the gossiping memoir writer of having invented the conversation which he alleges took place at this dinner. He asked the Secretary how lord North took the communication when made to him. The reply was, "As he would have taken a ball in his breast; for he opened his arms, exclaiming wildly, as he paced up and down the apartment during a few minutes, 'Oh God! it is all over,'—words which he repeated many times, under emotions of the deepest consternation and dis-

\* "Last Journals," vol. ii. p. 475.

† Note by Mr. Ross, in "Cornwallis Correspondence," vol. i. p. 135.



gress.\* Lord George Germaine appears to have had very little official reticence, if Wraxall is to be believed, for he read to the same mixed company a letter from the king, in reply to the communication of the disastrous news: "I trust that neither lord George Germaine, nor any member of the Cabinet, will suppose that it makes the smallest alteration in those principles of my conduct which have directed me in past time, and which will always continue to animate me under every event, in the prosecution of the present contest." †

\* "Memoirs," vol. ii. p. 103.

† *Ibid* p. 108.

On the day that Cornwallis signed the capitulation, Clinton despatched the auxiliary force for his relief. When Cornwallis and his superior officer met at New York, their difference of opinion became a matter of serious controversy, which was abundantly taken up in parliamentary debates, and in pamphlets not devoid of personal acrimony. These charges and recriminations were soon forgotten in the more important political events that were a certain consequence of a calamity through which the war would very soon come to an end. There can be no doubt that the government felt the capitulation as an irreparable disaster. Wraxall, in his "Memoirs of his Own Time," has related a conversation which he had with lord George Germaine, as to the mode in which lord North received the intelligence. Wraxall, a very shrewd and inaccurate writer, has confounded the official account of the surrender with a French Gazette that reached London on the 25th of November. Clinton's despatch did not reach lord George Germaine till midnight of the 25th, as is shown by a minute on the back of the letter; and therefore Wraxall's statement that lord George read the despatch to him and others at dinner, between five and six o'clock is certainly incorrect. But nevertheless we cannot in common fairness, accuse the foregoing memoir writer of having invented the conversation which he alleges took place at this dinner. He asked the secretary how lord North took the communication when made to him. The reply was, "As he would have taken a ball in his breast; for he opened his arms, examining which, as he paced up and down the apartment during a few minutes. 'Oh God! it is all over!'—words which he repeated many times, under emotions of the deepest consternation and dis-

\* "Memoirs of Mr. Fox," in "Cornwallis's Correspondence," vol. ii. p. 127.  
† "The Journals," vol. ii. p. 127.



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